

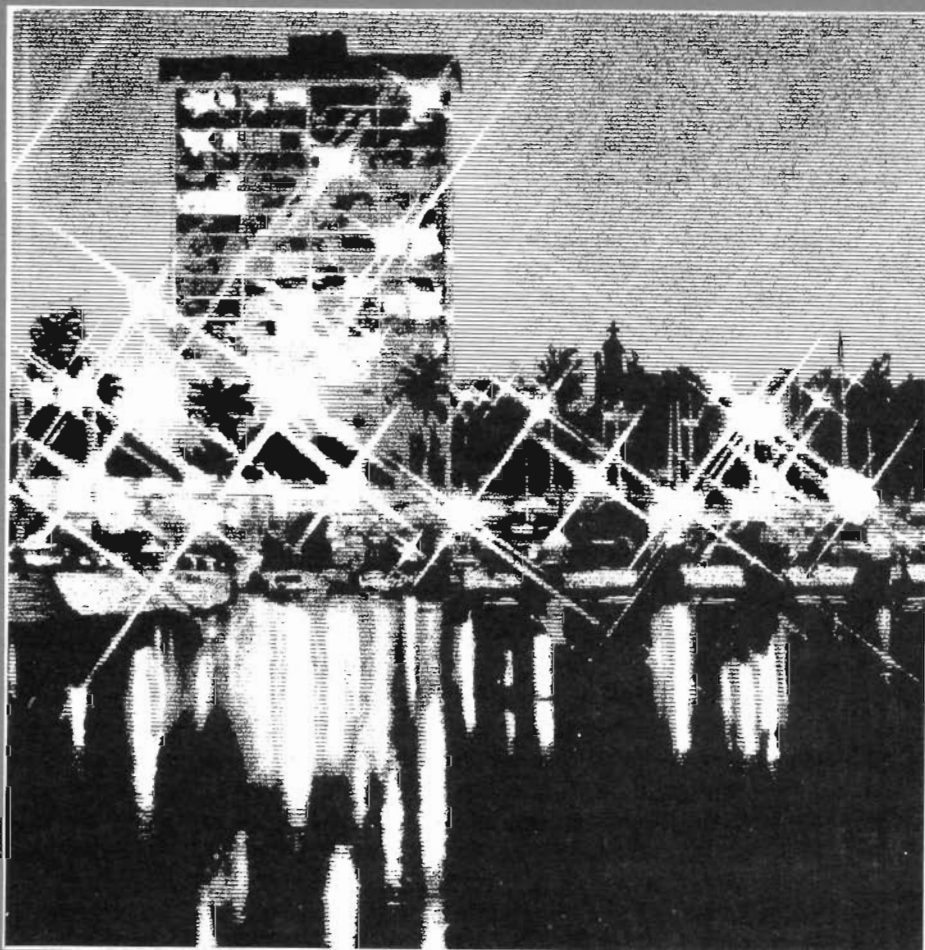


THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

September 20, 1994



Proclaiming the Light of His Word



AFLC
Home
Missions

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

September 20, 1994 • Vol. 32, No. 17

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR is published biweekly (except for the first issue of July and the first issue of August) by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441.

CONTENTS

The purpose of AFLC Home Missions	p. 3
Partners through prayer	p. 4
Meet new AFLC missions	p. 6
Changed lives	p. 8
Co-workers with God	p. 12

Subscriptions: \$15.00 year, U. S.
\$18.00 year, International

Write to:

The Lutheran Ambassador
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

Send all communications concerning this magazine to: Solveig Hjermstad, Assistant to the Editor, Box 423, Faith, South Dakota 57626. Phone (605) 967-2381. Fax (605) 967-2382.

USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413
Second-class postage paid at Minneapolis, Minnesota, and additional mailing office.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *The Lutheran Ambassador*, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441.

Rev. Craig Johnson, Editor
Mrs. Wayne Hjermstad, Assistant to the Editor

Editorial Board:

Rev. John Mundfrom
Dr. Craig Jennings
Mrs. Oryen Benrud

Light on the Way

The circle grows

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

God has never been content with a small circle. He is the God of the universe. He is the God who "so loved the world." It is certain that He loves us individually. His love and care can concentrate on a single hair on our heads. He loves and cares for our local congregations; He is concerned about our "Jeruselems." But He is also the God who said, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth." He is the God who repeated this same command to Noah and his sons after the flood. He is the God who scattered the builders of Babel over the face of the whole earth. Through Abraham and his seed God purposed to bless all the peoples on earth. The arms of the God who "so loved the world" are not shortened. He can embrace the world.

It is not God, but God's people who are often too small-hearted, too parochial. We have our own very personal, very local interests. Therefore, it is difficult for us to reach out, even to our Judeas and Samarias, to say nothing about the ends of the earth. We like to stay in our comfortable nests.

But the God who sent His only Son, Jesus from the comforts of heaven to this earth to die for our sins is the God of the big heart. This divine Son, one

with His Father, said to His followers, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." Go into all the world; begin at Jerusalem, but do not stop there. Reach out, make the circle bigger.

The Holy Spirit was sent to Jesus' followers. The Holy Spirit came upon them. They now had power to speak, to move, to live, to do miracles, to be bold, loving and strong. They had divine authority; divine energy.

Nevertheless, inertia sets in too quickly, even in the early church. Their feet grew tired, heavy, not light and ready to take the good news to those who have never heard. But God is at work. Stephen is martyred; Christians are persecuted. Persecution pushes believers out of their nests. They are scattered, and everywhere they go they scatter the good Seed of the Word. Now not only those people living in Jerusalem hear the Word, but also those of Judea and Samaria. The circle widens.

Let us thank God for all individuals, congregations, denominations and associations who make the circle bigger. These are those who plan, pray and plug away as they scatter the Seed; never forgetting that it is only God who makes things grow!

— by Odell Kittelson

The *purpose* of AFLC Home Missions

*Though the days are
terrible,
these are days of
opportunity.
People are looking
for a place.
A harbor
where the truth of
God's Word is the
anchor for
their soul.*

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about the character of the last days in II Timothy 3. He described this period of "last days" as different "times." These "terrible" times will be ones in which Satanic violence will be very evident. Paul saw these characteristics beginning to appear, and now we see them increasing in intensity. Evil is boldly accepted and promoted by many in our society. It is blatantly displayed before our eyes in every possible way. We are truly living in these "last days."

Paul gives us good instruction to follow in these days when, in verse five, he instructs the Christian to turn away from that which is false. He also instructs us in verses 14-17, to continue in the truth of God's Word. The only way to defeat Satan's lies is the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Evil men and deceivers will go from bad to worse. God's Word must be our stability and strength in these days. The Word of God is able to lead people to faith in Christ (v. 15). This eternal Word will also equip the Christian for every good work (v. 17).

Proclaiming this is the goal of AFLC Home Missions. We continue to focus on establishing free and living congregations built on the living Word of God. It is this Word which will lead people to faith in Christ and equip the Christian for these terrible days.

Though the days are terrible, these are days of opportunity. People are looking for a place. A harbor where the truth of God's Word is the anchor for their soul. Paul instructs the Christian to continue in the things we have learned, to fight the good fight of faith; not to lay down and give up because of the evil days. May God grant us the resources to run the race set before us and faithfully put our hands to plow and not to turn back.

We thank God for everyone who has supported Home Missions through prayer and gifts. We are faced with exciting opportunities! May Paul's words in II Timothy 3:7,8 encourage each of us:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing.

— Rev. Allen L. Monson
Chairman, Home Missions Committee
Lakeville, Minnesota



The author greeting people after services in Beulah, North Dakota.

Partners through prayer

"... And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ ..." (Colossians 4:3).

Pray that God Himself would open the doors for the work of His Kingdom to go forward. And, pray that we pastors may learn to rest in His perfect will and timing in all situations. It is easy for us to become impatient with slow and steady growth when we would like to see the work "explode." Pray that our concern might always be for individual people in need of Jesus and His love, rather than just for numbers to increase and budgets to be met. Certainly, as we add members to our congregation it will help to become financially self-sufficient, but our desire is that people come to know Christ first of all.

As a pastor I have always felt a need to have people praying for me as I seek to serve Jesus in my ministry. However, that need has been magnified greatly during these past two years of serving a home mission congregation. Perhaps it is because the pressures to "succeed" are much greater and there is a temptation to feel it all depends on you as the pastor. Therefore, I would like to suggest some ways to pray for home mission pastors and congregations. You can become a partner in the work God is doing through your prayers.

"I pray that out of His glorious riches, He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being ..." (Ephesians 3:16). Pray for inner encouragement in the face of much outward disappointment. In a community the size of Bismarck people have the choice of attending many different churches. It is easy for a small, home mission church to become lost in a sea of larger, more visible congregations who have more to offer. When people do visit our services, many will not return, for

How you can pray for a home mission pastor and congregation.

what reasons we will never know. Others, who do take an interest and start attending, may be forced to move because of a change in jobs. Faced with these disheartening situations, it is easy for pastor and congregation to feel discouraged. Pray that God might give inner strength to face these circumstances, and provide small encouragements on a regular basis.

"... Since the day we heard of you, we have not stopped praying for you ..." (Colossians 1:9). I would challenge you to "adopt" a home mission congregation so that you may pray *specifically* for their needs. It is much easier to pray when you feel personally involved. Learn to know the people in "your" congregation individually. Pay them a visit and attend one of their services, if possible. Correspond by mail or phone call to find out specific needs and concerns. Contribute to their needs by gifts to the AFLC Home Missions Department designated for them. It has been personally encouraging to me as a pastor to find other congregations, as well as individuals, within our district who have supported us with prayers and gifts. Their concern helps us realize we are not alone in our efforts to see the Kingdom of God go forward.

You can be a real "partner" in the work of a home mission congregation as you pray. Prayer may seem like the **least** you can do. Have you ever commented, "Well, at least I can pray about it." Prayer is really the **most** important way to share in the work of planting and building new congregations. Join us and share in the ministry!

— by Rev. John D. Mundfrom
Bismarck, North Dakota



*It may not be on the
mountain's height
Or over the stormy sea,
It may not be at the
battle front
My Lord will have
need of me;*

*But if by a still,
small voice He calls
To paths I do not know,
I'll answer, dear Lord,
with my hand in Thine,
I'll go where You want
me to go.*

"I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go"

— Mary Brown

AMBASSADOR HYMNAL No. 500

Meet new AFLC Missions

St. Andrew Lutheran Churubusco, Indiana

An enthusiastic congregation has emerged in this Fort Wayne-area community. The congregation is about a year and a half old and has an average attendance of 50 with new people attending each Sunday. Pastor Robert Schemn serves the church.

The congregation learned about the AFLC by sending out ten letters to various Lutheran groups expressing an interest in seeking the Lord's will regarding affiliation. According to Pastor Schemn: "We got the best response from the AFLC so four of us drove up to Minneapolis to visit the headquarters."

St. Andrew has a strong youth program and a mission vision for the 70% unchurched people in the area. Their evangelism committee meets biweekly to discuss reports from the door-to-door evangelism visits and the weekly follow-up visitation made by members of the congregation. Pastor Schemn said: "I am amazed every time I get out. The needs are there and people are hungry. You have to visit them often, then maybe a year later they will actually come to visit at church."

Worship services beginning in Bellview

A new mission group has begun in Bellview, Texas, a community just west of Houston. Rev. Clyde Grier of El Campo conducts the Saturday evening worship service. Pray for this most recent mission start.

Prince of Peace Lutheran Beulah, North Dakota

God was at work in people's lives in the Mercer County communities. Lillian Bergstadt and her husband had been attending various meetings and conventions in their Lutheran church body and were becoming more disturbed by what they saw and heard. She said, "Then one day we saw an ad in the *Beulah Beacon* announcing a meeting to discuss the possibility of starting an AFLC congregation in the community." That was June of 1993. Lillian continued, "We decided to form a congregation even though we were approximately six families."

Ron Jorgenson was raised near Tioga, North Dakota and is the brother of AFLC pastor Gary Jorgenson of Ottawa, Illinois. Since moving to Beulah with his young family, he desired to see an AFLC congregation in that community.



In August of 1993, the Jorgenson home held Sunday evening services with Pastor Allen Monson, then of Dickinson. Interest continued as people came from nearby communities, even some 30 miles away. Until January 1994, various pastors and laymen from the western North Dakota district shared the pastoral duties. Then last January, Pastor John Mundfrom of Calvary Free Lutheran in Bismarck, accepted the additional

Amarillo Mission Amarillo, Texas

Only four Lutheran congregations exist in the Amarillo area with a population of about 120,000. It was indeed newsworthy when on August 4, 1994, 26 people gathered for the first worship service of this new AFLC fellowship.

The small group has been meeting in a home for Bible study led by Pastor Joseph Schultz of Christ Evangelical Lutheran in Tulia, some 75 miles away. Pastor Schultz has begun his new ministry in Deshler, Nebraska, so for now the Bible studies are led by lay people and future worship services are yet to be scheduled.

Interest in affiliating with the AFLC came through relatives sharing what the AFLC stood for as well as an ad in the local newspaper announcing an AFLC Infor-

mational Meeting. The southern Home Missions' BARNABAS team had a tremendous impact this past summer on the families already involved in the fellowship group. The team also left a wonderful witness to many in the community. The group's first Vacation Bible School was held in a home and up to 21 children attended. According to David Forsberg, "We are already waiting for next summer's BARNABAS team!"

Pray for this small group of Lutherans seeking to form a congregation which believes the Bible as the Word of God. Pray for their neighbor congregation, Christ Lutheran in Tulia as they call a new pastor as the Amarillo group depends on their initial leadership coming from Tulia. Finally, pray that in the meantime, more families will become involved with the home Bible studies.

responsibility of serving Prince of Peace on an interim basis.

The highest attendance so far has been 40 and the congregation has been self-supporting. "We have received gifts from many good people, congregations and groups which has helped us maintain a positive checkbook balance." Ron Jorgenson added, "Our Savior's of Dickinson has taken us on as one of their mission projects." The church is excited as they look down the road: during October 2-5, they are sponsoring special meetings at the local school with Pastor Gary Jorgenson preaching; they are included in the AFLC Home Mission budget beginning January, 1995; they plan to open the charter membership soon and hope to begin calling a pastor as they seek to reach out to the unchurched and church dropouts in their community.

Monroe Free Lutheran Monroe, Washington

Dick and Sally Angel had become disenchanted with things that had been happening in the congregation they had been attending. "Instead of a sermon, all we had was a two minute homily," according to Dick. They stopped attending any church for awhile. They heard of a Free Lutheran congregation that was beginning in their area, meeting at the local grange hall. They had not heard of Free Lutheran before, but they thought it sounded worth investigating. They went one Sunday, liked it and decided to go again. They have kept on going now for about a year and a half and are pleased with what God is doing in their lives through this new congregation.

Dick enjoys being a part of a congregation that "sticks to the

Bible instead of all the political issues." He "likes the way things are closeknit, moving in the right direction, with people all working together."

Working together is essential in a small, beginning congregation. Areas in which the Angels have been involved include "inviting people we know and talking up the church quite a bit." Dick is also helping in the search for a new organist for the congregation. Plans are under way as well to begin a choir for the first time.

It may be a grange hall in which they meet, but that is not important to the Angels. "I could worship in a barn." What is important is meeting with a caring congregation to worship God, centered on His Word. The Angels are thankful they can say they are part of a congregation like that.

AFLC Home Missions



Changed lives

A testimony of one family's involvement in a home mission congregation

When I think about what AFLC Home Missions has done for my family, I always think of Philemon 4-7: "I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the saints, and I pray that the sharing of your faith may promote the knowledge of all the good that is ours in Christ. For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you" (RSV).

Since the day I was saved, my desire was to serve the Lord Jesus. One of the things He has allowed me to do was to serve as chairman of the Christian Free Lutheran Church in Wheatland, Iowa. We began in January, 1988, with fear and anticipation, with sadness and joy. The darkness of those difficult first days was quickly dispelled once AFLC Home Missions became involved. Pastor Elden Nelson, the director, promised they would send a pastor from the seminary to preach on Sunday mornings. He explained the cost for this service, then added that the Home Missions Department would take care of the expenses. I could not believe that. As I shared this news with our congregation, we began to understand the blessing when a church body shares that

rently building a church addition.

But that is not the real story. What really matters is that individual lives and families have been affected by the AFLC Home Mission work in our community. Our whole family has been changed. During a sharing time one Christmas Eve, our oldest son was touched, and his heart was convicted through the service. Several weeks later after returning to Boston, he called home to tell us he had repented of his sins and asked Jesus to come into his life.

Our second son decided to try Bible school at the age of 22 and he enrolled at AFLBS. How thankful we are that we knew of a school that taught biblical principles and upheld the Holy Scriptures as the true, inerrant Word of God. Our older daughter serves on the board of our youth group and has been to two FLY conventions in Colorado. Recently our youngest daughter prayed to ask Jesus into her life. God has indeed been at work in all our children's lives for which we praise Him!

There are many families in our congregation that have experienced these same, wonderful changes! I often wonder if any of this would have been possible if home missions had not been so instrumental in helping our congregation start.

Our lives continue to change as we grow closer to Jesus Christ. We are learning more about His Word and are memorizing Scripture. We have begun home Bible studies. The members of our congregation genuinely care for each other and we enjoy sweet fellowship with one another. We have learned how to praise the Lord in our worship services and look forward to going to church whenever the doors are open.

The Lord has answered many prayers. I recall the little six-year-old boy who came to our church who was healed by God from cancer. Then there was the premature baby girl born weighing under two pounds. Her only physical problem now is that she has to wear glasses.

God is good. On behalf of the congregation, I thank the Lord Jesus Christ for the blessing we have received through home missions. I have personally prayed for a day when I could say "thank you" from the bottom of my heart. I believe God has answered that prayer for me now.

"I often wonder if any of this would have been possible if home missions had not been so instrumental in helping ..."

kind of love for a new congregation. This was a totally new experience for us.

As the weeks passed, we discovered we had so many needs: a building, furnishings, organization and spiritual leadership. I called Pastor Nelson nearly every week and he always answered my questions and assured me they were praying for us and would help any way they could. We praise God for Pastor Nelson's wisdom and his love for the church. We called our first pastor in 1989. Pastor Tim and Rose Carlson and family continue to minister to our growing congregation. We are no longer on Home Mission aid and are cur-

— Larry Behne
Christian Free
Lutheran Church
Wheatland, Iowa

Traveling light

Rev. Dick and Clara Gunderson head out once again for missionary service in Mexico.

Some would say they have already done their part. Now is the time for them to stay where it is comfortable and easy. "Settle down and enjoy your grandchildren" would be the advice some would give. Rev. Richard and Clara Gunderson listened to a different call, however, and are now returning as missionaries to Mexico.

The Gundersons have received a call from the AFLC World Missions Department to serve as missionaries and are on loan to the World Mission Prayer League (WMPL). It is not the first time for them to serve with WMPL. In 1967, after graduating from the Free Lutheran Theological Seminary, the Gundersons began a time of service with WMPL that continued until 1983 and included work in Bolivia and Mexico. They return now, after serving AFLC congregations in Escanaba, Michigan and Lake Stevens, Washington, because of the Lord's call and what He has laid on their heart to do and to be.

In Mexico the Gundersons will be working with the Mexican Lutheran Apostolic Alliance. They are interested in coming alongside the national church and being involved in training and equipping others to do the work of ministry. They pray they will be able to catch a vision of the needs of the national church and be used by God as a source of encouragement.

The WMPL work in Mexico is spread out over three different areas. A Bible school exists on the

west coast of the country in Mazatlan. Work is also going on in the state of Puebla, southeast of Mexico City and in Nogales, on the border with Arizona. The AFLC, WMPL and Latin American Lutheran Mission are three groups with similar emphasis, spirit and fellowship, and all have work in Mexico. The Gundersons are praying for increased cooperation among the groups that could

lead to enhanced training for national workers.

WMPL is a Lutheran missionary fellowship which makes a single commitment to its missionary from the membership and that is to pray for them. The belief is that when prayerful consideration and a legitimate call exists, God will provide the necessary resources.

The Gundersons expressed that, while it is difficult to leave, they are excited about returning to the mission field and "traveling light." They are pleased to be reminded again of the commitment the AFLC has had from its earliest days to, as Rev. Gunderson says, "a broader horizon of ministry than only within our fellowship. We recognize a diversity of ministries. We carry with us our uniqueness, our zeal for evangelism, as well as holding fast to the Word, to the ends of the world in a variety of ways."



After 16 years in Bolivia and Mexico, and 11 years serving U. S. congregations, the Gundersons return to mission work in Mexico.

Their temporary address:

Rev. Richard and Clara
Gunderson
1068 N. Duncan Dr.
Nogales, AZ 85621

Youth Leadership Conferences held



A prayer walk was conducted around the chapel. The youth went around seven times praying for a different topic each time.



Small group devotions were held. Teens were challenged with the importance of prayer in their daily lives.

The Association Free Lutheran Bible School campus was the site of the 1994 Youth Leadership Conference during July 18-22. "Foundations for Life" was the theme based on curriculum from Sonlife Ministries. The teacher was AFLC Associate Youth Ministries Director Bob Halvorson.

Nearly 75 youth and 25 adults spent the mornings studying Romans with Rev. Dennis Gray, AFLC Youth Ministries Director. The *Foundations for Youth Ministry* curriculum featured six areas of instruction: Creating an atmosphere of love; Building a group image; Maintaining a contacting ministry; Communicating a proper relationship with Jesus Christ; Building a prayer base; and Creatively communicating the Word. The youth were challenged to build these six foundation principles into their youth groups, then watch God bring growth. Pastor Joel Rolf, Chairman of the Youth Board and organizer of the event, commented on how he has found these principles to be valuable biblical concepts for the life of the church as a whole.

The theme of the conference was carried into the evening services. Those sessions were led by Pastor

James Lyle Johnson, Fosston, Minnesota, the president of Free Lutheran Youth. He challenged the teens regarding their personal walks with God. Ollie Frenzil, Northome, Minnesota, remarked that it was Jim's evening message on the three men in the fiery furnace that caused him to want to take a bolder stand for the Lord at school. The Ambassador Gospel Team and the Cornerstone Luther League Team shared music at evening services and assisted as counselors for the week.

Those attending came from eight states including as far away as Nogales, Arizona, and Bethel Park and Aliquippa, Pennsylvania.

West Coast School

The first annual Leadership School on the West Coast was hosted by Triumph Lutheran, Ferndale, Washington, during the weekend of July 8-9. Rev Dennis Gray and Rev. Joel Lohafer were the instructors for the approximately 20 youth and advisors attending. Pastor Lohafer taught a class on "How to Study the Bible" and Pastor Gray led studies in Nehemiah and the six foundations of youth work developed by SonLife Ministries.

Afternoon highlights of the week included a Tuesday trip to the Metrodome in downtown Minneapolis, where the participants had the rare privilege of playing softball in the Dome. On Thursday, the youth visited the Mall of America in Bloomington.

— Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck
Northome, Minnesota

Youth news

Counselors are needed for Estes Park in 1995. If you are interested, please write Rev. Dennis Gray, Youth Ministries Director at P.O. Box M. Greenbush, MN 56726.

Grant received

Lutheran Brotherhood Life Insurance Company has announced a \$7,800 grant for counselor training and speaker honoraria for the 1995 FLY Convention. The announcement came from Jan Walsh, Grants Coordinator for the Minneapolis-based insurance company. In May of 1995 \$7,020 will be paid, just a few weeks before the National Free Lutheran Youth Convention at Estes Park, Colorado.

Start making plans now for the 1995 FLY Convention in Estes Park

The 1995 National Free Lutheran Youth Convention will take place at Estes Park, Colorado on July 17-22 with a theme of "Dare to Live the Difference" for ages 7th grade to 20 years old. The cost is \$250, if registered before March 1, 1995; counselors, \$125. Registration closes July 1, 1995. Send registration and \$50 pre-registration fee to Rev. Brian Davidson, registrar, Free Lutheran Youth, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441.

Note: you must pre-register. Your \$50 deposit is refundable if cancellation is made before July 10, 1995. Make checks payable to Free Lutheran Youth.

Hats off to you!

Congratulations to the Helmar teens of Newark, Illinois! They were given the Sportsman-ship Award for the second consecutive year by the coaches and officials in the Monday night volleyball league.

Ruthfred teens of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, plan to participate in the Crisis Pregnancy Center Walkathon on September 24th.

Emmaus youth from Bloomington, Minnesota, spent August 21-31, on a missions trip to Mexico.

On having the right goals

Goals are important, more important for some people than for others. Surely believers are to have goals, something they press towards. There is always the possibility the goals are wrong, however. Goals that may appear good can produce evil and mischief. Strangely, even a goal such as the salvation of souls has dangers connected with it. Let us think about this!

God's Word clearly teaches what the means are by which faith and spiritual life come. Our goal must be to use those means humbly and prayerfully to the best of our abilities, in obedience to those means themselves. We can do nothing better than that. If we go beyond this, mischief can result.

The means by which a spiritual awakening and the salvation of souls come are the Word of God and the Sacraments — Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Genuine spiritual awakenings come by no other means. Sinful man often tries other ways. The devil, the father of lies, can bring about what, for a time, looks like a spiritual awakening. Sincere believers may use wrong means in order to reach a desired goal. Going beyond loving invitations, all kinds of motivational gimmickry, pressure, shame, pride, promises, etc. are at times used to bring people to the altar or to make a decision. Strange "conversions" result.

Goals of numbers are dangerous. If our goal is so many more congregations, there will likely be some strange congregations. If our goal is so many more pastors, there will likely be some strange pastors. If our goal is so many evangelists, there will likely be some strange evangelists.

Let our goal be "diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). Paul continues to encourage young Timothy to "preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (4:2). Let us administer the blessed sacraments as instituted by Christ Himself. We are not handling the Word properly if we do not. As we thus raise up Jesus, He will draw men to Himself.

What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God causes the growth (I Corinthians 3:5-7).

Let us be content to plant and water, knowing that God will give the increase in His good time. **Any increase that does not come from God is a trap for the church.** The goal of planting and watering is attainable, not to our satisfaction, however. (We are unprofitable servants.) If our goal is beyond this, "burn-outs" are inevitable, and unrest will prevail in the church. Only planting and watering will produce "living" Lutheran congregations, godly pastors, missionaries, evangelists and teachers.

Let us prayerfully think about this.

— Rev. John Strand
Remer, Minnesota

Co-workers with God

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee (Titus 2:11-15).

These verses provide instruction for our life as the Lord's stewards. When I was a young man, our pastor said I should memorize these verses. Ever since they have been a constant guide and comfort in my life.

We are not our own, for Christ has redeemed us. Therefore we are to glorify God in every aspect of our lives. Our focus should be on Jesus; what He has done for us, and that He is coming again. Then as we pray for His will to be done in our lives, delight in studying God's Word and the Holy Spirit will show us the way.

There were times in my life that God revealed His will in different ways. When I started farming on my own, God gave me the desire to designate a certain field as a mission field with all of the income given to missions. One year I raised a new variety of oats that I would be able to sell for certified seed. This being my mission field, I prayed about where I should sell it for the best price. As I drove by a nearby elevator, I felt led to stop in and ask what price they would pay. The manager said he would pay twenty cents over the market price and if he could he would pay more later. He did just that.

Another year my mission field was sent to support a member of our congregation who was serving with her husband and family in Africa. I sent the full amount in

one check to them. It arrived the day they needed it and the amount was exactly the cost of their tickets to return home. I did not know of their need but God did.

While I was farming I never had hail or crop insurance. God gave me the faith to believe He was in control. Throughout the years I never had a crop failure or enough hail damage to pay for a single insurance premium. God gave me the desire to honor Him by not working in the field on Sunday and He always provided weather to allow the crops to be harvested on time. The Lord led me to give ten percent of the farm income to His work. God honored His Word and blessed me beyond measure.

The Lord desires our complete surrender to His will. I had not been in a classroom for many years when another farmer in my congregation asked if I would attend AFLBS with him for the winter quarter. I enjoyed it so much I returned the following two winters and took the classes for credit. I highly recommend attending our Bible school. Psalm 119:11 declares: "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee."

God wants to use us in His service. One evening at the conclusion of special meetings, the evangelist gave an invitation to come to the altar to rededicate your life. I sensed the Holy Spirit's nudge and

went to the altar and prayed, asking God what He wanted me to do. When I arrived in the basement for refreshments, I was asked if I would be willing to speak at a nearby chapel. I knew I could not say no. Philippians 2:13 says: "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." He desires our willing service.

The Christian life is a life filled with joy. There is no room for selfishness. We are to share the gospel with our fellowmen. "Occupy until I come" is His command. There is no greater joy than to be about the King's business!

The greatest of His commands is that we "love one another." There can be no life worthwhile that is not moved by love. We are in warfare, but we must not use carnal weapons or violence. The Bible encourages us to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. In following the example of the Master we see that He used moral weapons only: the light of truth, the love of justice and the power of the Spirit-filled life. Self-surrender to the Spirit of God in accordance with His Word is the secret of the victorious life of a steward.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 says it well: "Thus saith the Lord, 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercises loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.'"

— Joel Rogenes
Stewardship Board Member
Ely, Minnesota

Each year in the parishes that I have served, we have celebrated Harvest Home Festival on the second Sunday in October. Although not on the liturgical calendar, Harvest Home Festival is healthy for us to celebrate. In Exodus 23:16 we read, "You shall observe the festival of harvest, of the first fruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall observe the festival of ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor" (NRSV).

While Thanksgiving is an appropriate time to give thanks, Harvest Home Festival, celebrated in October, helps us focus on the bounty of our Creator's gifts to us. The Hebrews celebrated the bounty of the land as we witness in Leviticus 23:10, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest" (NRSV).

In my first parishes I served in country settings. I watched the harvest out of my window: the cornstalks were collected, the

Gathering and thanking

straw and hay were baled, and the fruits and vegetables were gathered from the gardens. In my second parish on the second Sunday in October, we collected a sampling of that bounty on a table in the chancel in front of the altar.

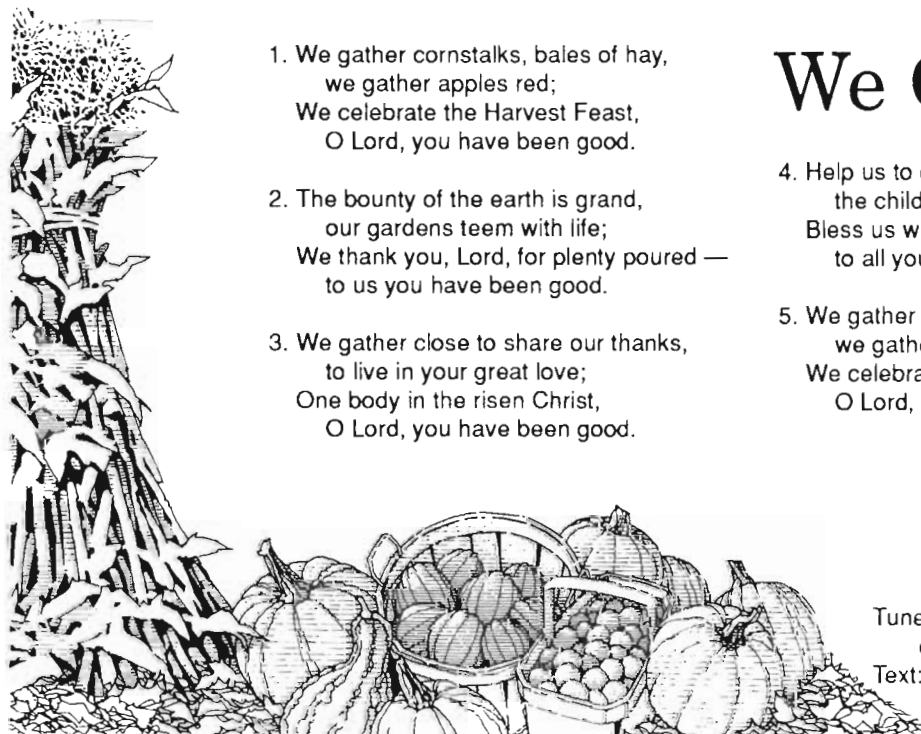
More recently I have encouraged parishioners to expand their view of Harvest Home Festival. Beginning on the second Sunday in October we collect food goods on a table in the chancel. The collection continues until the Sunday before Thanksgiving when we dedicate the collection and deliver it to the local community food pantry. If we have received gifts of money, we purchase turkeys and deliver them with the collected food goods.

During the weeks between Harvest Home Festival and Thanksgiving, I emphasize the larger context of the heavenly harvest. We gather in worship just as the Hebrews did thousands of years ago: "Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a

covenant with me by sacrifice!" (Psalm 50:5 NRSV). When gathered, we remember God's promise to his flock, "He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep; (Isaiah 40:11, NRSV). But we also remember the firm words of John referring to Jesus, "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire: (Matthew 3:12, NRSV). We gather seeking forgiveness and renewal in Jesus Christ.

"We Gather" may be sung to any Common Meter hymn tune. Try a tune that may be more familiar to your congregation. Celebrate a Harvest Festival this fall giving thanks, gathering food and souls, and sharing food with the homeless.

— by Rev. Roger L. Tappert, STM
St. Mark's Lutheran
Indianapolis, Indiana



1. We gather cornstalks, bales of hay,
we gather apples red;
We celebrate the Harvest Feast,
O Lord, you have been good.
2. The bounty of the earth is grand,
our gardens teem with life;
We thank you, Lord, for plenty poured —
to us you have been good.
3. We gather close to share our thanks,
to live in your great love;
One body in the risen Christ,
O Lord, you have been good.

We Gather

4. Help us to gather faithfully
the children of your hand;
Bless us with pow'r to love the lost —
to all you have been good.
5. We gather cornstalks, bales of hay,
we gather apples red;
We celebrate the Harvest Feast,
O Lord, you have been good.

Tune: Dundee CM (LBW #524)
or Winchester Old CM (LBW #264)
Text: Copyright R. L. Tappert 1994-H141

PEOPLE and PLACES

Fosston, Minnesota — Calvary Free Lutheran is considering a proposed new church building plan of over 11,000 square feet.

Duluth, Minnesota — St. John's Lutheran will host Fall special meetings during October 9-11 with Rev. David Barnhart, Melbourne, Florida, as the speaker.

Rev. Howard Kjos, Roslyn, South Dakota, has accepted the call to serve part-time at Grace Lutheran Church, Aberdeen, South Dakota.

Rev. Jan Horne, formerly of Mt. Morris, Illinois, is serving as interim pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, Fairbury, Nebraska. Approved by the Coordinating Committee for call in the AFLC, he previously was the interim pastor at the Kasson-Dexter, Minnesota parish.

Evangelist Nels Pedersen, Golden Valley, Minnesota, is serving as the interim pastor of Morgan Avenue Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

1994 WMF District Fall Rallies

Central Tri-State - October 1, Salem, Radcliffe, IA

Eastern North Dakota - October 1, Trinity, Grand Forks, ND

Illinois - October 15, Fox River, Sheridan, IL

Lake Superior - September 24, St. John's, Duluth, MN

Minneapolis - October 15, Hope Free, Wyoming, MN

North Central Minn. - October 15, Calvary Free, Fosston, MN

Northern Michigan - September 17, Maranatha, Chassell, MI

Northwestern Minn. - October 8, Our Saviour's, Thief River Falls, MN

South Dakota - Nebraska - September 24, Abiding Savior, Sioux Falls, SD

Southwest Central Minn. - October 4, Calvary, Fergus Falls, MN

West Coast - September 17, Calvary, Everett, WA

Western North Dakota and Eastern Montana - October 1, Bethel, Minot, ND



Eden Prairie, Minnesota — King of Glory Lutheran celebrated 25 years of ministry on August 20-21. Pictured is the choir which sang at the Saturday evening service. AFLC President Robert Lee was the guest speaker.

Ferndale, Washington — Triumph Lutheran Church celebrated the 25th anniversary of their church building on June 5. They also dedicated their new pews and carpet during the same service. Pastor Richard Gunderson, then of Lake Stevens, Washington, was the keynote speaker.

Rev. and Mrs. Clair Jennings, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on October 1. Their address is 1625 Sylvan Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

Mission Fest '94

The Annual Mission Fest at Christ Lutheran, Wichita Falls, Texas, will be held on October 1-5. Pastor Heldur Kajaste, a Russian ministering for a short time with

Christ the King Lutheran in Pipestone, Minnesota, will be the guest speaker.

The ham radio sessions will be October 1, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central Time and on October 2, from noon to 2 p.m.

Talk to our AFLC missionaries in Mexico and Brazil. At 10 meters - 28.455; 15 meters - 21.350; 20 meters - 14.305; 40 meters - 7.238.

New Addresses:

Pastor Mark Olson, 107 Hopkins Dr. Arlington, SD 57212 phone: (H) 605-983-0076, (W) 983-5254.

Rev. Terry Olson, 1156 21 St. W. #122, Dickinson, ND 58601; phone: (H) 701-227-8465, (W) 227-1652.



Rev. David and Janet Abel and family have returned to Brazil to begin new work in Vila Velha. Their address is: Caixa Postal 242, 29100 Vila Velha, Espírito Santo, Brazil, South America.

It's a scary place, but we need to go

We were four seminarians traveling across Minneapolis, returning to the west side suburbs after classes at the University of Minnesota. It was a nice summer evening and we decided to stop for ice cream. We were not in the nicest part of the Twin Cities. A policeman regularly patrolled the McDonald's where we were. When we went outside to finish our cones he asked us to either go back inside or leave. Groups of young men weren't allowed to congregate outside. It wasn't an environment to which we were accustomed.

Most of us in the AFLC are probably not too accustomed to urban life. Let's admit it: the big city scares us! We want to be in a small town or a rural setting, or at least in a nice suburb. Those are the places where our church body has traditionally been. To many of us, the inner city is like a very foreign and frightening land.

In His final words to His disciples Jesus called us to be His "witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). John Perkins, the publisher of *Urban Family* magazine, says the urban community is our "Samaria," a mission field God has called us to be a witness to and in. He feels churches need to be planted in the urban areas, with Christians relocating and living among this country's hurting people. We must remember the gospel of Jesus is the answer to the massive problems besetting our nation's cities.

Followers of Christ need to be willing to lay down their lives for Him and for each other. Yet, according to Perkins, "Somehow, we as Christians have lost this concept. It seems as though our commitment is primarily to ourselves. If the neighborhood gets too rough, instead of staying there and being a witness for Christ, we just move to a safer neighborhood. Believe me, this shallow demonstration of our commitment to Christianity is not going unnoticed."

As we think of home missions and the planting of new congregations in the United States, what areas in the country are we praying about? What communities do we have a vision for? What people do we care about and want to reach?

Most definitely congregations are needed in rural areas, small towns and in suburbs. But the urban areas are also in need of Bible-believing and living congregations. They are overflowing with people in desperate need of hearing of the love of Jesus and the hope He offers. Let us pray that God would give us the heart, the vision, the wisdom and the opportunity necessary for planting more congregations in America's urban areas.

We may say, "But those areas and those people are so different from us." Throughout the Bible God con-

tinually calls His people to go and share His love with people different from themselves, whether they be in a foreign land or in our own country. The good news is our powerful God can overcome those barriers that may divide us. In the book of Acts He used Jews to reach Gentiles. He can use whites to reach blacks, Scandinavians to reach Hispanics, small-town and farm boys and girls to reach inner-city kids. He can equip us, protect us and use us, even in what may seem like incredibly difficult areas, because He is an incredible God.

God wants you

The U.S. Marines are famous for expressing their desire to recruit "the few, the proud, the strong." They want it to be known that, while many can try, only a few can make it to be a part of their corps.

Sometimes we may get the mistaken idea that the work of planting new congregations is like the Marine Corps — there's only a place for a few. That is far from the truth. Starting a new congregation involves much more than simply sending out a pastor while the rest stand back and watch to see what he can do. A congregation, to have a healthy beginning, needs committed and active lay people. They can often contribute in ways a pastor never can.

God may not want you to earn your living from being in full-time Christian service, but He may still want you to be involved in the planting of a new congregation. Possibly He would want you to relocate to an area where prayers are being offered up for a new church to begin. Maybe God wants you to go to school or work in a community where a congregation is just beginning. That congregation would be thrilled to have you come and be a part of their work. They could find a number of opportunities for you to serve. No matter what your gifts may be, there is an important role that you can play in the building up of God's church.

I dream of Bible school students going into the home missions office and saying, "I'm about to graduate and go on to college or work; where could I go and help a new congregation." I dream of people saying, "I can find work in that community full of unchurched people. Let's move and be a part of a new congregation." Dream of where God would desire to use you and remember, He wants you as His child, He can use you in His work and He can do things through you that can exceed your wildest dreams. He "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20).

How can I know for sure?

Frightening statistics

I remember back to my college days when one of my professors quoted a nationwide statistic that three out of four Lutherans did not have an assurance of salvation. The same may be true in many other church groups. To be quite frank this figure shocked me. Over the years as I have worked as a pastor with people I have come to realize how true this really is. Many people who say they are Christians do not have an assurance of salvation. To assure is to "put beyond all doubt." When I ask people if they are headed for heaven there is almost always a wavering response. Why is that?

A revealing flight

I was traveling to Israel on a study tour. While flying over the ocean I had a conversation with a pastor. After a long discussion I asked him, "If you were to die today would you go to heaven?" His response was, "I don't know." I then asked him why God would or would not let him into heaven. His response was truly what he believed and yet it was contrary to what the Bible teaches.

He said his eternal direction was ultimately based on whether or not he had more good in his life than bad. I said, "Are you saying it is like a scale with 'good' being weighed on one side and 'bad' on the other? And if my life has more good, then I make it into heaven? However, if there is more bad than good then I don't make it into heaven?" He responded with an unhesitant, "Yes." I then asked him if you can ever know for sure beyond all doubt, that you are going to heaven. He said, "NO!"

Can I really know?

Can I really know for sure I will spend eternity in heaven or would that be presumptuous at best? The Bible clearly says I can.

However, Satan is working overtime to convince Christians they are not saved. He tries to cast doubt on our salvation.

Dear reader, how are you going to respond to these accusations? Do you know "beyond all doubt" that you are saved? If you were in that airplane on your way to Israel and it crashed into the ocean, would you have passed on into the heavenly promised land? The Bible says that you can know that you are headed for heaven. The whole purpose of the Bible is for us to know this fact. I John 5:13 says, "*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life*" (emphasis added).

Do you have Jesus or not?

The answer to the question of assurance of salvation is found in I John 5:11-12. "*And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*" The issue is really quite simple. You don't need to go to college or graduate school to unravel the question and try to answer it. It all comes down to one simple point. Do you have Jesus? This verse reminds us that being saved is a gift from God. He is the one who has given us the free gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. Hav-

ing said that, you only need to determine one issue: Do you or don't you have the Son of God. Have you received the free gift of salvation and made Him your personal Savior? If you have, this verse then tells you that you have eternal life. If that is your destiny then you can "put beyond all doubt" the fact that you are saved.

Please believe the truth of God's Word and not your feelings. If you have not trusted in Jesus Christ as your Savior then you do not have the Son of God and thus are not headed for heaven but hell.

The importance of assurance

What difference does it make anyway? It makes a lot of difference when it comes to freedom in your Christian life. It is so freeing to realize that your standing with God (your eternal destiny) is not determined by your walk with God (how good or bad you are). You can experience the ups and the downs of the Christian life and yet walk freely and not under bondage and fear. You must still take sin in your life very seriously as it affects your relationship with God and with people. However, you have a calm assurance of salvation that reminds you that God has given you eternal life. By faith in Jesus Christ, you can rest in that assurance!

— Rev. Todd Olson